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# The Non-Subscribing Presbyterian

No. 276. JULY, 1930.

TRUTH — LIBERTY — RELIGION.

"If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men."
—Romans xii. : 18.

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## Editorial.

### Rev. Eustace Thompson.

On going to press we learn with profound regret that the Angel of Death has touched the Rev. Eustace Thompson, of Cairncastle, calling him suddenly away from his earthly labours. Mr. Thompson was fatally injured when he collided with a motor car while motor cycling on the Old Cairncastle Road, on the afternoon of Saturday, 21st June.

With the sense of loss so fresh in our hearts it is difficult to express our feelings. In time the inarticulate numbness will give way to the spontaneously expressed appreciation of the life and work of a much-loved Christian gentleman, but at present we can do little more than express our deep regret at his passing. Of the many admirable qualities that combined to form his lovable character, perhaps the most outstanding was his never-failing kindness. Mr. Thompson was the embodiment of human kindness. He bestowed favours with the grace and humility of one who was always the recipient and never the giver.

Our loss is indeed great, but our sympathy goes out to one whose grief is much greater than ours. To Mrs. Thompson we extend our heartfelt sympathy and earnestly pray that God, in His mercy, will support her in this supreme hour of trial.

### General Assembly Meetings.

It is unfortunate that more of our ministerial and lay representatives do not attend the annual meetings of our Church across the channel. This year there seemed to be fewer than ever. The Rev. G. J. Slipper, who as Clerk of Synod, responded for the Non-Subscribing Church of Ireland, to an address of welcome to visitors (why should representatives of our Church in Ireland be regarded as "Visitors"?) extended an invitation to our friends across the water to attend the annual meetings of the Non-Subscribing Church in Belfast. We all cordially endorse the invitation, but we can hardly expect it to be accepted until we show a little more interest in the larger body of our household of faith.

* *

### Annual Synod Meetings.

The one outstanding feature of the meetings was the poor attendances. The one exception was the annual lecture, which drew a larger audience than usual.

The Annual Service followed by a Communion Service both conducted by the Moderator, the Rev. J. Glynne Davies, were very poorly attended, while the Annual Dinner which brought the meeting to a close, was attended by exactly thirty-one people! We refrain from offering any comments.

* *

### The Retiring Moderator.

To the Rev. J. Glynne Davies our thanks are due for so faithfully carrying out the duties of Moderator during the past year. If our Church is always served as well in this capacity as it has been served during

the past year we shall have little to regret. In his retiring address, Mr. Davies briefly reviewed the year's work, drawing special attention to the fact that we had allowed the Remonstrant Synod Centenary to pass without adequate recognition and expressing the hope that something might yet be done to suitably mark this important event.

* *

**The New Moderator.**

The Rev. John Barron, of Ballyhemlin, is the new Moderator, and he assumes office with our good wishes. Many of our readers will know Mr. Barron better as "Ullin," the regular contributor to our columns. Our ministers and lay officials know him, not only as an interesting writer, but also as a keen Church worker. His regular attendance at our various Committee meetings and his keen interest in the welfare of our Church as a whole, furnish an example of loyalty worthy of imitation. For nearly twenty years he has been a faithful servant of the Non-Subscribing Church, and it is only fitting that he should now serve it in the capacity of Moderator. We feel sure that the higher service will be equally faithful. The new Moderator is to be congratulated on his well deserved honour.

* *

**The Annual Lecture.**

When the subject has been chosen *for the lecturer* and *not by him*, and when that subject deals largely with theology which can be extremely dull at times, and when in addition, that subject is so treated as to hold the interest of a fairly large audience for an hour, then it is not necessary to pay a tribute to the lecturer. Those who listened to the Rev. R Nicol Cross, M.A., on "The History of the Principles of Subscription during the last 100 years" will need no further convincing that creeds and dogmas fail to secure uniformity of belief, the very thing for which they were framed and for which they are retained. What a pity Mr Cross was lecturing only to the converted?

* *

**Sunday School Conference.**

Glorious weather favoured the Annual Sunday School Conference at Holywood, on Saturday, June 7th. The attendance though large, seemed to fall short of the average of the last few years. Of the hospitality of our friends at Holywood and of their kindness and consideration to the hundreds of visitors, we cannot speak too highly. The address by the Rev. J. H. Ewbank, B A., B.D., was listened to with much interest. Those who heard it will be pleased to have it in this month's issue; those who were absent have a pleasure in store for which they have to thank Mr. Ewbank, who, with his usual kindness, wrote the address out in full for the benefit of our readers.

* *

**Sunday School Essay Competition.**

When presenting the prizes in the Annual Essay Competition, the Rev. J. Glynne Davies drew attention to the relatively small number of competitors and appealed for more. It is to be hoped that our Ministers and Sunday School Teachers will heed this appeal, and will bring their influence to bear on the young people in their charge. Our Sunday School scholars, should be encouraged to write essays, particularly on subjects connected with our own Church and its liberal religious faith. It was a happy thought that led the Rev. A. L. Agnew, B.A., to offer a special prize (won by Miss E M'Cartney), for the best essay of "The Past, Present and Future of our Church." To Mr. Ewbank our thanks are due for reading the essays and acting as adjudicator.

* *

**A Real Sunday School Conference?**

There is a growing feeling that the Annual Sunday School Conference, while being an exceedingly pleasant social function and serving a good purpose by bringing members of scattered congregations into close touch with each other, yet fails as a *Sunday School Conference*. The name is misleading. A real Sunday School Conference would bring all our ministers and teachers together to *confer* and to talk freely with each other over the common problems and difficulties of Sunday School work. This is not in disparagement of the present annual meeting which is undoubtedly one of the most pleasant and successful gatherings in connection with our Church. It is just to suggest that it would be profitable to hold a *real Conference* of Sunday School Workers.

# The Teaching Function of the Church.

Annual Sunday School Conference, Address at Holywood, 7th June, 1930,

By The Rev. J. H EWBANK, B.A., B.D.

**I.—Ideals and Functions of the Sunday School.**

A little London boy was once asked to give his opinion of the respective merits of his Day School and Sunday School. He replied, "Well, in day school they do teach you something, but in Sunday School they only mess you about." This is a view not uncommonly held by many people to-day and it serves to show clearly that the Churches have not advanced along the lines of educational reform. Generally speaking, people do not regard the Sunday School as a school in the strict sense of the word. In secular education the study of pedagogical principles has been regarded as the basis of all advance. The Churches have almost overlooked it. This is surprising, for the teaching office of the Church lies at the very heart of her commission, "Go ye into all the world and teach!"

We should endeavour to take the Sunday School very seriously, and endeavour to make it a school in the real sense of the word. Its methods, its curriculum, its text-books, its training of teachers must be regarded in the light of true educational principles. It is a necessary part of education. Its aims are not opposed to the aim of the public elementary school, but rather complementary. And unless we regard Sunday School work as important enough to be well organised, well equipped, and up-to-date, we must not be surprised if parents and scholars do not take us seriously.

In the past the Church, or a large section of the Church has resorted to the old-fashioned type of revival meeting to make good its losses. That type of revival has now lost its power, and makes no appeal to earnest and sincere workers in the Church, but to sentimentalists and to those swayed by emotion. Even Mr. Moody, the well-known evangelist, several years before he died acknowledged that the masses no longer came to his revival meetings as in former times, and that his mission in the later years of his life was with the people inside the Church. There is now a revival of a different kind, a revival inside the Church, of the teaching function of the Church, and especially among the young.

Now a question: Why should we speak of the revival of the teaching function of the Church? Largely because the part and prominence of teaching has been lost sight of during the ages. Preaching has been magnified so as to belittle teaching. But teaching comes with no less a claim than preaching. The latter has no precedence over the former, nor has the former over the latter. We need both. Thomas Fuller, in 1661, said of the "Faithful Minister": "He doth not clash God's ordinances together about precedence." What then is the history of the teaching function of the Church? What place has teaching in the Bible and in the Church?

**II.—The Teaching Office in the Past.**

(1).—The prominence of teaching in early Jewish tradition. There are many traditions of Jewish schools for religious instruction, and those traditions speak of the power and influence of these institutions.

(2).—The prominence of teaching in the Old Testament. In Nehemiah we have a description of a Bible-school, fully organised and officered. There were schools of the prophets in which young men were trained. The Jews were known and are still marked for the purity of their family life, largely because the duty was imposed upon every parent of giving children religious instruction.

(3).—The prominence of the teaching office according to contemporaneous history. Josephus declares that the Jews assembled every Sabbath to hear the law and learn it accurately, and that so thorough was the instruction of the young in the law that one would more easily repeat all than his own name. So basal and far reaching was this work upon the nation that it gave rise to the maxim, "If you would destroy the Jews, you must destroy the schools." Schürer says: "The main object of these Sabbath Schools in the synagogue was not public worship but religious instruction."

(4).—The prominence of the Sunday School in the teaching of the New Testament. The synagogues with their accompanying Bible-schools were found in all towns and villages of Palestine, and in many Gentile cities. Furthermore, is it not said of Jesus that he was "a Teacher come from God."? And what is the great commission of Jesus but this: 'Go teach,' 'go make disciples or learners.'"?

(5).—The prominence of the Sunday School in the early centuries of the Christian era. The Jewish system of schools for religious instruction was followed by the early church, and the rapid spread of Christianity over the civilised world in less than three hundred years is attributed to this system of teaching. So powerful and influential were these schools that Julian the Apostate issued an edict in the fourth century suppressing Christian teachers from these schools. In the succeeding centuries as the Church grew worldly and formal it made more of ritual than of a pure faith and magnified orthodoxy, and instruction declined.

(6).—So in subsequent periods. Historians have pointed out that better and purer life has come as the Bible has been more faithfully taught and studied. Luther placed the Bible in the hands of the people and a great religious awakening followed. The Sunday school organised by Robert Raikes was the beginning of a new era in the national life of England. Green the historian speaking of the effect of Raikes' work on England's dark and troubled days following the American Revolution, says: "It was then that the moral, the philanthropic, the religious ideas, which have moulded English society into its present shape first broke the spiritual torpor of the eighteenth century."

The function of the Church is to teach as well as to preach. Formation of character is better than reformation of character, as prevention is better than cure.

**III.—The Strategic Work of the Church.**

With all the magnificent work the Church has accomplished, the thousand kindly ministries that engage it, the sublime purpose that animates it, it would be surprising if it had not left some things undone. As one who loves the Church and appreciates the magnitude of its work, one is yet impelled to say that our Protestant Churches have been and still are *negligent* of adequate training of children. It has been carefully estimated that less than 30% of the population of Britain are attendants of Church services. Who are these non-church goers? They are for the most part of Protestant birth and affiliation. Roman Catholics, whatever else they may or may not do are faithful Church attendants. Whatever may be said of the doctrines and methods of the Roman Catholic Church, it yet remains true that their people are obedient to her requirements. The Roman Catholic Churches are filled on the Sunday, and during certain seasons of the year Churches are filled for services of worship at the early hour of six or seven in the morning. Now call the fidelity of the Roman Catholics superstition; say all that can be said against their belief, the fact remains that the Roman Catholic Church receives from her people the exact things that she asks from them: observance of Church requirements and appointments. How can we explain this? There is only one possible explanation, and that is the early, continuous, studious and thorough training of the child. If children can be so trained in what appear to us strange rites and beliefs as to be controlled by such beliefs through all the later years of life, what might not be accomplished by devoted training of our Protestant children in our view of the Christian faith?

Sir Francis Xavier said; "Give me the children until they are seven years old, and anyone may take them afterwards." He went through the streets of Goa ringing a bell, exhorting parents and householders to send their children to be instructed. When Loyola and others saw the tide of battle turning against Rome they were in despair. They conceived the idea of getting hold of the children and rearing up a generation of lovers and defenders of the Church. The principle that the young are the hope of the Church has never been lost sight of by the Roman Church. It is for us to recognize the value of adaquate Christian nurture, to revive the teaching function of the Church to be vitally in contact with young life.

**IV.—The Necessity for Christian Nurture.**

There are urgent reasons why we need to devote ourselves to the instruction and nurture of the young.

(1).—The future of the Church requires it. The question facing us is not merely, "What of our Church to-day?" but also, "What of the Church to-morrow? Our schools have supplied hundreds of members to the fellowship of the Church, and many of our congregations have been built up because of the Sunday School. What stronger testimony do we need of the value of religious training than the fact that 80% who come into membership of Churches are the product of the Sunday School? The statement admits of no question or

shadow of doubt that if we train the children to-day we have the Church of to-morrow.

(2).—The Sunday School is the training ground of character. Its purpose is to teach religion as a branch of education. There are thousands of men and women in our towns, who learnt all their morality in the Sunday School.

(3).—The purpose of the Sunday School is to train scholars in Christian living. A great deal of our education is to enable a boy to earn a living. It is education for a livelihood. We need education for a living but we also need education for life. The central message of Christianity is life, life more abundant, which is found in following the spirit and ideals of Christ. "This is life eternal that they should know Thee the only true God, and Him whom Thou didst send." The Sunday School should teach what the day school omits, namely the art of worship and the Christian faith. It is futile to teach badly on a Sunday what is well taught during the week.

(4).—The distractions of life are almost overwhelming. Many people simply drift along on the currents of worldliness, commercialism, materialism, and the social dissipations that surge through life. How is it possible to counteract such influence? Christian training in a vast majority of homes is a thing of the past. Family worship is a lost art. Bible study at home is the exception. Therefore it falls to the Church to do what others do not do for the religious instruction and training of youth.

For these and other reasons there is urgent necessity to revive the teaching function of the Church.

**V.—Guiding Principles.**

(1).—One of the first considerations in Sunday School work is to establish some connection with the parents and homes of the scholars. After all it is largely the parents who make or mar the children. All children look out upon the world with the eyes of the family to which they belong. A child is more easily led by its parents than by its Sunday School teacher. With regard to the home much more co-operation might be secured than is attained at present. There should be help from the pulpit. Sermons should be preached about Sunday School work. It should also be one of the topics of the Women's League. There should also be Parents' Days at the School. They should be invited to come and see the Sunday School at work, and we should see when they do come, that there is something worth looking at. The value of the parents' example should be stressed.

(2).—There is one principle which should guide us in the choice of material for our courses of instruction, viz.: the principle of *Concentration*. By this, I mean, there should be unity of aim in all we teach—all our teaching should be governed by one fundamental definite purpose. There must be one circle of thought. In the Sunday School we are well advised to concentrate. We have the scholars for only one or two hours a week. The school is for a very definite purpose, namely, to teach children to live and learn the Christian Faith, and to make them fully instructed church people. We must therefore concentrate on the "Faith." Hitherto in the Sunday School this fact seems to have been forgotten. There has been no unity in aim—no idea of concentration. The principle requires a centre round which the subjects taken in the Sunday School should be grouped—a leading idea underlying all our teaching—and I suggest that leading topic should be "The Christian Faith."

## For Power to Serve.

Master of men,
Teach us this day how to serve our fellows,
Show us Thyself incarnate once again.
In the starving, the plague-stricken, the outcast.
Give us an unappeasable desire
To heal, to feed, to uplift.

Teach us to tear off the thick folds of disguise—
The meanness, the impurity, the beast-nature—
Which hide in sinful man Thy perfect image.

Show us first of all our worthlessness,
Our own need of thee, our own miserable failure
To live as Thou would'st have us live.
Then give us the keen eyes of love, that in the basest
Can pierce unfailingly through all disguise,
And discover Thy likeness concealed within.

Give us an unquenchable resolution,
All our lives through, to regard above all other duties
The duty of service to Thy needy ones.

May we spend ourselves in an unceasing endeavour
To set Thyself free in them,
To release them into the freedom and fulness of true manhood,
Into that land of purity and joy,
Where the beast in man perishes,
And the God stands forth clearly revealed.
*Amen.*

—An Indian College Prayer.

# The Late Rev. Eustace Thompson.

## Funeral Service and Burial at Cairncastle.

On Tuesday, 24th June, the mortal remains of the Rev. Eustace Thompson were laid to rest in the Church Cemetery at Cairncastle. The small Church at Cairncastle was packed and many were unable to gain admission. There were present, men, women and children of all classes and creeds, bearing eloquent testimony to the high regard and respect in which Mr. Thompson was held. The service, conducted by the Rev. John Begg, and the Rev. Alfred Turner, was deeply impressive. After the Church service the sad procession wound its way to the small graveyard on the hill, and here, surrounded by mourning friends, including many ministers of all denominations, with the sun overhead shining its benediction and the blue sea in the distance flashing back the lights and shades of heaven, the dust was returned to the earth from whence it came.

In the course of a touching address in the Church, the Rev. Alfred Turner, speaking with great feeling, said :—" The circumstances in which we are met are nothing short of tragic. The catastrophe is sad beyond all expression. We are plunged at one moment's notice into the helplessness of the most mournful and dreadful event. The terribly sudden death of the minister of this congregation, our friend Eustace Thompson, leaves us for the moment in the blackness of despair. It touches acutely the heart of every man and woman of every class and creed throughout this country-side ; and beyond seas mourners will drop their tears at the news of his passing and the manner of his passing. But the greatest grief finds its place in the heart of the bereaved widow, our friend Mrs. Thompson, who for twenty years has moved in and out among the people of this district always intimately concerned in the affairs, always cheery, bright and helpful, and always finding the deepest satisfaction of life in helping her husband to discharge his clerical and pastoral tasks. Mrs. Thompson holds a place all her own in the hearts of the people and for long years to come there will be men and women living about this lovely country-side who will remember the time when this cultured lady resided in their midst and helped so much to make life happier for them. On her falls the cruel blow ! For her the light of life has gone out ! She has been robbed by death, of all the beautiful, happy things life contained for her ! Her loss is immeasurable. What can we say of comfort, of help ? In our poor words only this—" We share your loss, we share your grief, we pray our Father in heaven to bless you and keep you and of His great mercy to sustain you in this your dark hour of trial."

The congregation worshipping in this Meeting House has sustained a serious loss. His place will not be easily filled. For he was a man of outstanding ability and character. There are to be seen specimens of his work done in the study which are lovely and beautiful. They used to remind me of a picture I saw in a poem, a picture of a monk in cloistered cell copying scripture and making those wonderful capital letters and saying at the end of a long day's work : " Thus have I laboured on and on nearly through the Gospel of John," and so I used to see my friend in modern times and with modern means, different coloured inks and type-writer, produce most beautiful work, work which you would say had its inspiration in a beautiful mind. And if his equipment as a preacher was high, so far as knowledge went, his achievements as a pastor were no less perfect. They were indeed equally remarkable. He held himself at the beck and call of everyone to do every kind of work. If he set out on a journey on his own business he would think of those who might like to join him and he would issue invitations to that end. If not on his own business then he was on other people's business, always moving, always in co-operation with his wife to serve the people and to make them happier.

He was a great believer in Service. I remember once when in France word came down to a station where I was happier. He was a great believer in Service. I remember once when in France word came down to a station where I was working asking for me to be sent up to the Canadian Hospital where was a man who wished to see me. I got there with all speed possible, and there lying on his bed, almost played out, was my friend Eustace Thompson. He had not followed the easy road—as usual he had taken the most difficult way. Hard work day and night, lack of sleep, poor food, sometimes no food at all, an occasional order to rise in the middle of the night and single-handed prepare re-

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freshment for a passing battalion—these and other hardships left their mark, and he found himself in hospital. But there was no complaint from him—he was not that kind. He did not drop until he dropped in his tracks. And until he dropped every soldier who came in contact with him felt the blessing of his service and he always gave his best little bit to the man out of the trenches. He was great in the matter of Service.

I cannot tell you what manner of man he was. How can one man explain to you another man when the one man is a mystery to himself and does not understand himself. How shall he understand another? It cannot well be done. Our friend, like all other men, had his peculiarities. If he disliked a person he would go miles out of his way to do that person a good turn, and after that he would look for the next opportunity to repeat the service. His conscience told him to do that and his conscience must be obeyed. Indeed obedience to conscience was one of the controlling factors of his life and the position he gave to it among his spiritual attributes came very near to the attribute which some people recognise as infallibility. He always bowed to the ruling of his conscience. And so it follows that his sense of duty, a sense subject to the ruling of his conscience, was nevertheless equally keen. He never frittered away his time or indulged in idle moments. When not directly serving others he would sit down at that curiously charming writing-table of his and renew his search for truth. It would seem that his great object was to seek and, if possible, to find the truth and whenever he found it, as he understood it, he would apply it regardless of the consequences. Truth was not a thing to hide, not a thing to tamper with, not a thing to dress up, not a thing to put a sugar-coating around, but a thing to stand in its purity, for was not truth also a child of God, and would not truth at last make us free?

Let us in our sorrow believe that our friend has gained. There was nothing in him of the two unforgivable sins, nor do I know that his record of life was ever in anyway besmirched. He knew the teaching of his Lord. It may be that he liked not to look for his rule of faith and practice in any one exclusive direction, but his Lord stood out for him as the great personality of all time and he found in true Christian teaching the hope, or let us say in older phraseology, the salvation of the world. He has passed on. I cannot tell you what he has passed to, but I believe that when he entered that portion of the Kingdom of God which is beyond this life, he found that his service in the Lord had not been in vain.

## Centennial of The Remonstrant Synod.

Address at Dunmurry, on Sunday, 25th May, by Rev. A. Gordon, M.A.

*"He looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."*
*Heb.* xi. : 10.

We are here to celebrate a Birthday. Just a hundred years ago, on Tuesday, 25th May, 1830, seventeen Presbyterian clergymen, attended (with one exception) by their Elders, assembled in the First Church of Belfast, and the Remonstrant Synod of Ulster was born. Among their number was John Mitchell, of Newry, the theologian of the party; David Whyte, of Ballee, the hymnwriter of the body; William Porter, of Newtownlimavady, then Clerk of the General Synod of Ulster, and soon to be the First Moderator of the Remonstrant Synod; Robert Campbell, of Templepatrick, well known as "Honest Bob"; Nathaniel Alexander, of Crumlin, a fine scholar and teacher; William Glendy, of Ballycarry, perhaps the most eager controversialist on his side, author of "Plain Words for Plain People"; Fletcher Blakely, of Moneyrea, whom in my childhood I knew as one who could enter into a child's feelings, and a child's sports; Samuel Craig Nelson, of Dromore, a fluent Latinist, and the last survivor of the seventeen. Towering above them all was the majestic form of Henry Montgomery.

Montgomery was then 42 years of age; he had filled the Moderator's chair of the General Synod at the early age of 30, and the promise of a brilliant career had been signally fulfilled. I am not going to sketch his life, I refer you to the little pamphlet which will tell you all about it. Nor am I about to plunge into the details of the controversy in which he and Henry Cooke engaged on opposite sides. This only will I say: Those who admire Montgomery's gifts and his prowess, do but diminish his

fame, if they fail also to admire the gifts and the prowess of his great opponent; and blind they are to the significance of the struggle, if they cannot see that each of these great men was doing his best, in what he conceived to be the true interest of the denomination which he served and which he adorned. My business is simply to lay bare the ground of the Remonstrance, and to indicate the issue to which it points.

**The Westminster Confession.**

In 1705 the General Synod decreed that, thenceforth, subscription to the Westminster Confession of Faith should be required as a preliminary to ordination. The decree was not made retrospective. In course of time the administration of the law was relaxed; so that in 1782 the attention of the General Synod was drawn to the absence of requirement of subscription on the part of several presbyteries. As a natter of fact, only four of the fourteen presbyteries made a point of requiring subscription. It is often said that in 1782 the law of 1705 was repealed, on the motion of Dr. William Campbell. This, however, is incorrect. The General Synod resolved in 1782 that the law was "in force"; but next year, those words being deleted, the resolution simply declared that the law was as "usual," thus practically sanctioning the usage of the delinquent presbyteries. At length, in 1824, still without repealing the law of 1705, the General Synod unanimously passed a Code of Discipline which regularised, as we shall see, the action of the delinquents.

Yet, though in 1824 the Synod was unanimous, in subsequent years measures were introduced with the object of frustrating the provisions of the Code. Thus in 1828 the General Synod determined that all coming forward as students for the ministry, as candidates for licence, or as postulants for ordination, should first pass the examination of a special Committee, avowedly selected in the interest of Calvinian orthodoxy. The effect of this would be to cut off from those deemed heterodox any prospect of like-minded successors. Hence the Remonstrance. Its framers were in no hurry for further action. The Remonstrance was drawn up on 16th October,


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— The Unitarian and —

Free Christian Laymen's League

## BELFAST CHAPTER

meets in the CENTRAL HALL, ROSEMARY STREET, at 8 p.m., Third Thursday of the month, October to May, inclusive.

**OBJECTS** (inter alia).

To encourage laymen to take a more active part in the work of the Churches.

To form a bond of union and closer co-operation between the members of the various congregations.

The Committee invite those who are not already members to join. The minimum subscription is 2/6, and further particulars may be obtained from—

MR. J. H. GILLILAND,

35 Rosemary St., Belfast, Hon. Sec.,

MR. J. EDMONDSON, Jr., Asst. Hon Sec.

19 Lime Street, Belfast.

1828; the Remonstrant Synod was not constituted till 25th May, 1830; it was no hasty or ill-concerted move.

We have now to inspect the constitution given to this body on the Birthday which we are celebrating. "The Fundamental Principles of the Remonstrant Synod of Ulster," twelve in number, were drawn up by Montgomery, read to the meeting by John Mitchell, and passed seriatim with complete unanimity, on the motion of individual nembers. I invite your attention especially to the First and the Tenth of these principles.

**Infallibility.**

The First, then of the Fundamental Principles of the Remonstrant Synod reads thus: "I. That the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are the only infallible rule of faith and duty, and contain all knowledge necessary for salvation." Infallible is an unpleasing term until we learn what it is, and how to interpret it; infallible is the Latinised form of the simpler English term, unfailing. It is not claimed in our First Principle that the Scriptures are the only rule of faith and duty. Conscience is such a rule for the individual; the experience of mankind embodied in a system of ethics has a wider range. What is claimed for the Bible is that those who read it—fewer to-day than one would wish—and resort to it in the exercise of their individual judgment, find in it a unique and never-failing source of direction, both in the mysteries of faith, and in the problems of duty. To the truth of this claim, a grateful witness I believe is borne by those who really and steadily use the Bible. Nor, again, is it claimed that the Bible contains all knowledge. John Glas, a Scottish Presbyterian divine early in the eighteenth century, was the first, I believe, definitely to proclaim that the Bible was not inspired to teach history, though there is much good history in it; or to teach what was then known as natural philosophy, and now goes under the somewhat arrogant appellation of science, as though it took to itself the whole realm of knowledge. To see that the Bible makes no scientific claim, one needs only to open it; the Bible sun rises in the morning and goes to bed at night. All knowledge necessary for salvation, that is what our First Principle claims for the Bible, and this is the standard Protestant position.

**The Code of Discipline.**

The tenth Fundamental Principle of the Remonstrant Synod opens thus: "10. That we adopt the Code of Discipline sanctioned by the General Synod of Ulster in 1824." We turn, then, to the Code of 1824, published in 1825; at page 28 we find this: "Presbyteries, before they license candidates to preach the Gospel, shall ascertain the soundness of their faith"—not, you observe, their soundness in the faith, but the soundness of their faith—"either by requiring subscription to the Westminster Confession of Faith, or by such examinations as they shall consider best adapted for this purpose." Further on, at Ordination, we find this question: "Do you adhere to your subscription to the Westminster Confession of Faith, or (as the case may be) do you adhere to the declaration of religious belief made to your Presbytery at the time you were licensed?" This is in accord with the true Presbyterian idea, for, as George Gillespie, an influential member of the Westminster Assembly, puts it in 1646: "Presbyterial government is not despotical but ministerial, it is not a dominion but a service.'

Now listen to our Tenth Fundamental Principle in full: "10. That we adopt the

**N.B.—Editorial Communications should be sent to the Rev. S. P. Whitehouse, 19 Wellington Park Avenue, Belfast.**

**Phone—Malone 378.**

**Contributions must be in the Editor's hands not later than the 20th of the month.**

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**With which is incorporated The Unitarian Herald.**

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Code of Discipline sanctioned by the General Synod of Ulster in 1824; and to show that, in pursuing this course, we are not guided by a view to promote the advancement of any set of doctrinal opinions, to the exclusion of others, we do hereby publicly and solemnly guarantee to the congregations which are now under our care, and to those which may hereafter form a portion of our Church, the full, free and unrestricted exercise of their unquestionable right to elect, in all cases of vacancy, ministers entertaining such views of Divine Truth as the congregations themselves may approve."

### Non-Subscription an Option.

It is clear from all this that, while it is possible to take non-subscription as a Basis, the Remonstrant Synod does not do this, but treats it as an Option. The question at once arises: Is that a reasonable position? Is it compatible with the inbred pugnacity of human nature? Can the Subscriber and the Non-Subscriber hold a church membership in common? May the wedded to the Westminster Confession, and the severed from its embrace, live together in unity? Can Trinitarian and Unitarian meet in mutual counsel? I will not point to what actually had place in the General Synod from 1782 onward, and in the Synod of Munster during a period somewhat longer. These, it may be said, are exceptions proving a rule. Let it be granted that our Tenth Foundation Principle offers us an Ideal. It presents us with a Vision; a Dream, if you like; having features of a Prophecy, even of a Poem. And if you attempt to banish from religion the element of Vision, of Prophecy, of Poetry, that is in effect to fling the Sermon on the Mount into the waste basket. For there the clear lyrical note of Christ confronts our pride with the assurance that the meek are they who shall inherit the earth; confronts our conflicts with a plea that thrills while it amazes: "Love your enemies." Hearing this voice, the sheep on the right awake the chant: "Worthy is the Lamb!" It is only the goats on the left that cry: "O the incredible paradox!" Theologians have proclaimed our Lord, and rightly, as Prophet, Priest and King; strange that no theologian has had the wisdom and the insight, on a study of the parables and the precepts, to acclaim him further as Poet.

### Foundations of our City.

In truth the City of our Vision has foundations, and they are becoming in some degree apparent, laid deep even in rugged human nature. Churches are drawing nearer together, individuals are beginning to realise a better understanding. In our hymns we co-operate: if we do not pray together, we praise God in the music of each other's strains. The songs of praise we have been singing to-day come from authors outside our borders; in the hymnal of our neighbours, place is found for many of our contributions to a common psalmody, of which Sir John Bowring's "In the Cross of Christ I glory," and Oliver Wendell Holmes's "Lord of all being, throned afar," are well-known samples.

The worthiest purpose of any study of history is to discover the lessons of the past for to-day and to-morrow, and then to apply them. From our survey of the founding of the Remonstrant Synod there are two things which we may gather for future use. One is the supreme value of strength of conviction, the banishment of timidity, the confident step in the straightforward path, trodden by those who feared God and feared nought else, not despising consequences but joyfully accepting them. The other is the high importance of that spiritual elevation which concentrates in breadth of purpose, which tolerates in our aims and endeavours nothing mean, nothing selfish, but prompts us both to love and to labour for the highest good of those among whom God has given us a place. Strength of conviction, breadth of purpose, for the full attainment and diffusion of these virtues our prayers and our efforts may well be engaged. Yet not by mere efforts of ours can the City of our Vision be attained. Of that looked-for habitation of a new citizenship the Builder and Maker is God. Closing, I recall a great saying of mighty Luther: "I tell our Lord God plainly that, if He will have His Church, He must keep it Himself, for we cannot keep it, and if we thought we could, we should be the proudest asses in the universe!"

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"Whatever be thy religion, associate with those who think differently from thee. If thou canst mix with them freely and art not angered at hearing their discourse, thou hast attained peace and art a master of creation." —*Mohsan Fani.*

# Ur.

By Ullin.

"Terah took Abraham his son, and they went forth from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan." Map of Asia, Persian Gulf, two rivers flowing into it; Tigris and Euphrates. A short distance on the map from the head of the Gulf, to the west of the Euphrates is Ur. The mound which covered Ur was locally known as the Mound of Pitch. As far back as 1854, Mr. J. E. Taylor, British Consul at Basra was employed by the British Museum to make investigations. At that time excavation was not the skilled art it is to-day; all that the British Museum concerned itself with in those days, was obtaining curios to place in glass cases. It might have been better if Taylor had left the mound alone, as he simply broke down structures which would have been invaluable to the explorers to-day, if they had remained intact. However he found tablets which proved this was Ur. In 1918 the British troops were in Mesopotamia. An officer on the Intelligence staff had been an assistant in the British Museum. He made soundings and investigated and the result was that the British Museum put a regular expedition into the field which has been at work ever since. America has also come in with representatives from the Pennsylvania Museum.

Several very interesting facts throwing side-lights on the Bible narratives have come to light. After digging down very deeply a bed of clay was arrived at. At first it was thought this was the bottom of everything. However the digging was resumed, and it was found that there was a thickness of clay about eight feet. This indicates a formidable flood, "unparallelled in local history, affecting an area of 400 miles long and 100 miles across; but, for the occupants of the valley, that was the whole world."

A year ago in 1929, chronological evidence was obtained; shafts were sunk, and tablets found with writing about the thirty-seventh century before Christ, three hundred years older than wonderful tombs containing evidences of an advanced civilization, which belonged to the Sumerians, who are referred to in the Old Testament as "the people that journeyed from the East and came into the plain of Shinar (Babylon) and dwelt there." They brought with them knowledge of agriculture, of working in metal, of the art of writing. "Since then," say the old records, "no new inventions have been made." When the Sumerians arrived at Ur they found the remnants of a prior people, who have left hand-made pottery, rougher household wares used for cooking and storage, hoes and adzes of chipped polished stone, imported volcanic glass, sickles made of hard baked clay, evidences of very simple culture. The Sumerians in their records say "Then came the Flood, and after the Flood kingship again descended from heaven."

The bed of clay marks a break in the continuity of history; above it, the pure Sumerian civilization developing along its own lines, the other a mixed culture.

Under the clay was found a brick pavement not later than 3,200 B.C.; they had hit upon the ruins of that Ur which existed before the Flood. Cities of Ur are found layer upon layer, cemeteries have become deeply sunk in strata and forgotten and other cemeteries built upon them. With the strange conservatism of the east, the newer has always been built upon the model of the old, in fact following the basic outline of old foundations.

The methods of working are exceedingly interesting, cameras and special appliances are always in use; the work is as skilful and as delicate as that of a surgeon. In the tombs of Kings and Queens that have been opened, have been found a sort of inner chamber in which the royal coffin was laid, and round about in a courtyard in orderly formation, soldiers and other dignitaries and ladies of the court, sixty-five for a king, twenty-five for a queen. The royal person was a demi-god, and evidently it was an ancient ritual to have him and her accompanied into the next world with becoming dignity. No trace of violence in the mode of death is found, evidently each of the attendants took, perhaps, opium and hashish and lay down sideways.

A famous gold dagger, with wonderful work upon it, and many other valuable objects, including an ornamented harp, and a chess-board were found. In one place where the tombs of a king and queen were found, the king's name was A-bar-hi, and the queen's, Shub-ad. The latter was richly covered with beads of gold, silver and precious stones.

The skull of one of the ladies has had a mask of wax placed on it, and that with the head-dress, reveals the type, very

beautiful. Two silver models of the ram caught in the bush, have been found, one however too far gone to be built up again. But their date is 1,500 years before Abraham, so that doesn't fit in with the Bible story very well.

Houses at the time of Abraham were evidently even better than those now being provided by the "Subsidy," two stories high, built round a courtyard, with a gallery going round it, on which the upstair rooms opened out, as those on the ground-floor also opened on the courtyard. The central temple of Ur, built on a high platform like a fort, surmounted by a tower was called Ziggurab, Mount of God. The central one in Babylon with its very high tower was the Tower of Babel; Nebuchadnezzar's tomb has just been found at Ur. He was a great builder and reformer. In the centre of the later city, every fourth brick almost, has his seal. Whereas the religion had been a mystery religion, Nebuchadnezzar had the temple opened up so that the crowd standing on the plain could see into the interior, where was a statue of the god. That would be in all his cities. The Jews naturally would decline to conform to this edict, hence the story as it is in Daniel of the three young Jews. Two kings came after Nebuchadnezzar. Then the river shifted its course, and Ur being waterless became deserted and forgotten.

## Correspondence.

[Letters to the Editor are welcomed. They should be written in good taste, as brief as possible and duly authenticated. No letter will be inserted without the writer's name.]

Sir,

The Sunday School Conference was a disappointment. A great opportunity was wasted, thrown away. The title of the address was one that gave high hopes of earnest consideration and discussion, and I feel that no one could be more disappointed than Mr. Ewbank himself. How can earnest church members take thought for the morrow of their particular church, when such elaborate preparation, such enthusiasm worked up for weeks past, such an attendance so soon after Dunmurry is all expended, as was hinted, on the efforts of "the Whitewash Club."

The subject of the lecture is of pathetic importance to us. Such a subject would not have been dismissed so casually or carelessly by our orthodox neighbours at their recent Assembly meetings in Belfast. They discussed large problems, too, and no one can accuse them of having given less than adequate consideration to the topics chosen. We, on the other hand, faced with an admittedly dwindling church-population, do not so much as face the fact squarely. How, then, can we expect the same young people whom we hope to enlist in our aid to accept our guidance and to catch our enthusiasm—when there is neither the one to be accepted, nor the other to be caught. One might have expected, too, some reference to the League of Youth, still in process of birth, and to see and hear its present organiser.

The tea arrangements were excellent, as usual.

Yours faithfully, G. PRICE-JONES.

## Obituary.

### Mr. John Gracey, Downpatrick.

Our Congregation at Ballee, Co. Down, has met with another loss in the recent death of Mr. John Gracey, of Grange Walls, Downpatrick. For two years and a half, his health had been very trying, yet borne with the patient endurance belonging to such a sturdy character. His presence and help in Church membership was always generous. It is an open secret that the deceased gentleman has remembered, liberally, the welfare of our Non-Subscribing Church interests. By his sterling worth he won and kept to the end the respect and affection of all classes and creeds, as was shown by the large funeral cortège.

## Reports.

**Dunmurry.**—A very pleasant function took place here on the 13th June, when the ladies of the congregation assembled in the Meeting House to present their minister Rev. J. A. Kelly, with pulpit robes. Miss Roberts, on behalf of the subscribers made the presentation, and it is interesting to recall that she and her sister, Miss Jane Roberts, were prominently identified with a similar function 34 years ago. In handing over the robes she expressed the hope that Mr. Kelly would long be spared to wear them, and that they were freely given as evidence of the respect and esteem in which he was held by the members of the congregation. In expressing his thanks Mr. Kelly assured Miss Roberts and those for whom she spoke of his high appreciation

of the gift, giving evidence, as it did, of their regard for himself.

**Mountpottinger.**—The Annual Floral Services were held on Sunday, June 15th, when, in accordance with custom, the Church was tastefully decorated by members of the Women's League to whom the Church Committee are duly grateful. The morning service was taken by the minister, and in the afternoon and evening we were favoured by a visit from the retiring Moderator, Rev. J. G. Davies, of Comber, who gave us very pleasing discourses. A pleasing feature of the afternoon service was the Anthem sung by scholars. The work of the quartette reflected much credit on Mr. L. Watters, who had been responsible for the training. The Sunday School Excursion took place on Saturday, June 21st, when Ballywalter was visited. Up to 4 o'clock conditions were quite pleasant and the young folks enjoyed themselves on the sands whilst their elders rested and admired their efforts. Shortly after that however, Jupiter Pluvius took command of the situation and in a very short time everyone was compelled to seek shelter. Fortunately we had obtained permission to use an almost empty garage and here, under the direction of Mr. L. Watters, the scholars engaged in games and competitions until tea time. After everyone had been served a start was made for home which was reached about 8-30 p.m. If only the glorious sunshine of the earlier days in the week had been in evidence, matters would have been totally different.

**Moneyrea.**—The members of the Church Committee are very grateful to the Dramatic Society for the proceeds of their winter's work, a sum of over £29, which they handed over through Mr. Millen to Mr. Robert Kennedy, the Treasurer. The plays were: "The Courting of Mary Doyle," which was splendidly performed on March 21st, and. 22nd; the cast was—Mary Doyle, Miss B. Kennedy; Jessie, Miss L. M'Clure; Mrs. Kiernan, Miss M. Bryce; Mr. Kiernan, Mr. S. Bryce; Mr. Tisdall, Mr. Albert Fisher; Carmody, Mr. Thomas M'Canley; Rattigan, Mr. Frank Maxwell, and the "Able Dealer," which was presented on April 11th and 12th, the performance of which attained a high standard, and the caste was—Professor, Mr James Frame; Simon Daly, Mr. Samuel Maxwell; Peggy, Miss M Hogg; Michael J. Cogan, Mr. James Maxwell; Mrs. Cogan, Miss L. M'Clure; Dano Carrol, Mr. Edward Fisher; Mrs. Carrol, Miss M. Bryce; Mr. O'Sullivan, Mr. Robert Fisher. These performances were held in the Memorial School, which was taxed to its fullest capacity every night, and the players deserve high praise for their successful work.

**Moneyrea Women's League.**—On Sunday evening, June 1st, a service was held under the auspices of the newly formed branch of the Women's League. The service was conducted by Mrs Ewbank, Mountpottinger, whose address was highly appreciated by the large congregation present. Miss M. Doyle, presided at the organ, and the special collectors were: Mrs. Blair, Mrs Donnan, Miss Lamont, Miss Dougan, Miss Bryce, Miss Kennedy. After service, tea was served on the Tennis Court adjoining the Manse, at which friends from Comber, Mountpottinger and other churches were entertained.

**Ulster District Women's League.**—Nearly seventy members gathered in the Ballyclare Old Presbyterian Meeting House, on Saturday, June 21st, for the Quarterly Meeting. The service was conducted by Mrs. Glynne Davies, Mrs. Moore presiding at the organ. After tea, reports of the General Assembly meetings were given, including reports of the Women's League Annual Meeting, by the delegates, Miss Armstrong (First Church), and Miss O'Neill Ballyclare). Mrs. Forsythe, President of the Ballyclare Branch read Miss O'Neill's report. A gloom was cast over the proceedings by the tragic news of the death of the Rev. Eustace Thompson, of Cairncastle, and a resolution of sympathy with his widow was passed in silence, all standing.

**Warrenpoint.**—A very successful meeting of the Women's League was held in our quaint old Church here, on Saturday, May 24th. Members were present from Newry, Banbridge, Dromore and several of our Belfast churches. The service and address in the church was taken by Mrs. Slipper, after which the friends adjourned to the grounds where tea was provided, and much enjoyed. Following this, we had a further treat (still in the open air) as Mrs. Thompson, of Cairncastle, gave us a delightful little talk (which, we hope she will repeat at some future time with enlargements) on "Good Poetry, and the delight it gives to one when memorised." We had a real good time, as the weather and every other thing combined to make it so. There is no doubt that on future occasions many more members will be present, and none of them will lose their way, for those that have been before will only be too glad to return, and to act as guide to any new-comers.

# Ulster Unitarian Christian Association.

Hon. Secretary—REV. G. J. SLIPPER, 7 TREVOR HILL, NEWRY.

# CENTENARY YEAR

OF

# Remonstrant Synod.

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